



## Senator Feinstein Urges Congress to Act Quickly on Hybrid Waiver Legislation February 1, 2005

*Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today applauded Representatives Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) and Brad Sherman (D-Calif.) for introducing legislation that would permit states to let hybrid vehicles to use diamond or high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes. Following is the statement of Senator Feinstein:*

“I thank Congressmen Issa and Sherman for introducing this bill in the House. I plan to offer similar legislation in the Senate soon.

This bill would allow California, and other States, to implement laws permitting hybrid vehicles to use diamond lanes. California and other States do not want to risk losing their federal highway dollars by acting without a waiver from the Department of Transportation. This legislation would allow the Department to grant such a waiver.

Letting hybrid cars into these lanes is a low-cost and quick incentive to promote the use of hybrids. Hybrid cars can provide an innovative solution to help reduce our thirst for gasoline. They are more fuel efficient than cars powered by internal combustion engines. They emit fewer greenhouse gases that lead to global warming. Burning less gas can also help us achieve energy self-sufficiency. The cost for hybrid technology will decrease by bringing more hybrids into the market.

States have acted on their own to allow hybrids into HOV lanes. The current federal law, however, only allows States to let electric or natural gas powered vehicles into HOV lanes with a single driver. Some critics are concerned that HOV lanes will get overloaded, but each State can stop the program if congestion becomes a problem. And hybrids only make up a fraction of the cars sold today – approximately 43,000 of 16.7 million cars sold in 2003 were hybrids.

It certainly makes sense to allow States to encourage drivers to consume less gas by letting them in these lanes. I hope that Congress will act quickly to pass this bill so that hybrid drivers in California and elsewhere can take advantage of HOV lanes.

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